

FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY
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Annotation: *This paper explores the formation and evolution of historical geography as an academic discipline, tracing its roots from classical antiquity to its modern interdisciplinary applications. It examines how historical geography emerged at the intersection of history and geography, initially focused on the spatial distribution of historical events and gradually evolving to include cultural landscapes, environmental changes, and socio-economic patterns over time. The study highlights key contributors, methodological approaches, and the role of cartography and archival sources in reconstructing past geographies. Additionally, it evaluates how historical geography contributes to our understanding of historical processes, regional development, and cultural heritage.*

Key words: *Historical Geography, Spatial Analysis, Cartography, Human Geography, Environmental History, Cultural Landscape, Regional Development, Historical Cartography, Geographic Thought, Interdisciplinary Research.*

Accepting this distinct distinction, historical geography can be defined as the study of past states or changes in geographical phenomena. Its connection with history is recognized as the genetic study of change and its place within geography with minimal confusion. We recommend the use of the term geographical history (or sometimes, less successfully, historical geography). This is used to refer to the study of the influence of territorial differentiation and natural conditions on changes in society and culture. This would be best situated along the vague boundary between history and geography. There are many unexplored areas between geography and historical geography, which are currently being explored by intrepid geographers, historians, and anthropologists. We expect that historical geography and the clearly distinct history of geography will not continue to be confused, although some major bibliographic lists unfortunately continue to include historical geography under the former classification.

To reiterate, geography of the past and geography over time seem to be the best interpretations of historical geography. Whatever the significance of change over

time and whatever genetic approach there is, historical geography is not history, not even the history of geography, but an integral part of geography as understood by geographers, as has been illustrated in other essays and articles in this volume.

There is no room for an extensive textual critical structure to show the long history of the development of historical geography. However, while it is essential for all geographers to fully understand the ancient tradition of their field, it is appropriate to turn to a brief history of historical geography in the tradition of Western culture.

In the myths and legends of Homer, we can see some of the truths we can learn, attempts to reconstruct the past of the peoples and lands of the Aegean region. Later, Herodotus, one of the first historians of the West, in his famous prologue describing the struggle of the Greeks against the Persian invasion, established himself as a geographer and historian. His research, combined with critical study of old manuscripts and sophisticated argumentation, has impressed many modern geographers.

The philosophers and scientists who contributed greatly to the fields of mathematical and physical geography in Greek and Alexandrian literature showed little interest in the geography of the past; but the expansion of Greek culture, through the colonial activities of Greek cities in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions and later in the territories conquered by Alexandria, led to the emergence of descriptions of new territories. These depictions often included a type of historical territorial geography, in which the past and present states of territories were closely linked, but changes were rarely analyzed. In later centuries, Herodotus' work influenced Thucydides and other historians.

Among later writers, Strabo in particular paid attention to a descriptive narrative style that differed from the systematic approach to geography of the Greek philosophers. In his seventeen-book *Geography*, interest in territories was never limited to a brief account of the present. However, this historical-geographical tradition was not continued by later writers such as Pliny or the mathematical astronomer Ptolemy.

In the early centuries of the spread and dominance of Christianity in Europe, the absence of a clear historical-geographical approach is noticeable. The lack of information and the limited critical thinking led to the repetition of descriptions, many of which were inaccurate and doubtful. Roger Bacon, a Franciscan who is considered the father of the modern scientific method, described Ethiopia in a strange and careless way, which was obtained 1500 years earlier than Ptolemy.

Islamic geographers also made important contributions to the development of historical geography, although these literatures have not been studied enough from

this point of view. If we consider the translations and critical assessments of some famous figures, only a brief interest is shown as another side of historical geography. Al-Biruni's "Great Book of India" is considered to be the work that has the closest historical geography.

Among Islamic scholars, the most accurate and widespread analyses of historical geography can be seen by historians. In the 9th century, Al-Baladuri wrote historical works that paid special attention to geography. In the 14th century, Abulfida included similar material in his encyclopedia. However, the most important Muslim scholar on this subject is Ibn Khaldun, one of the greatest historians of any era or culture. Reading the easily accessible Prologomena of his Kitab al-Ibar ("General History"), it is clear that he was interested in how different geographical conditions, land and human relations, influenced the formation of peoples, civilizations and regions in agricultural or nomadic economies. It contains very useful information on geographical conditions in time and place.

William Camden's Britannia, published in 1586, is widely regarded as the first modern example of historical geography. But its purpose as historical geography was not entirely satisfactory. Indeed, for Camden and his contemporaries, and to many historians to this day, the identification and mapping of place names found in historical sources was what was called "the revival of ancient geography". Kemper's younger contemporary, Philipp Cluverius, was the first to take a deliberate and successful approach to historical geography. He published historical geographies of Germany, the Italian peninsula, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica, and was perhaps even more influential in the development of geographical thought than Varenius.

Geographical ideas emerged from the earliest stages of human society. The ancient Eastern civilizations—Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China—are recognized as the earliest centers of geographical knowledge. The knowledge of this period was more practical in nature and arose mainly from the needs of irrigation systems, agriculture, trade routes and military campaigns.

In Egypt, land measurements, astronomy and cartography were developed to take into account the regular floods of the Nile River. In Mesopotamia (Babylon), knowledge of distances between cities, irrigation structures and the structure of the earth's surface used in gardening was formed. In the Indian civilization, geographical knowledge related to the Ganges and Indus River basins existed, and in China, to the Yellow River (Huanghe) and Yangtze Rivers.

Although there were no geopolitical maps during this period, religious and mythological maps depicting the world landscape, such as the Babylonian map (c. 6th century BC), are noteworthy as the first cartographic attempts.

Ancient Greece played a special role in the theoretical formation of geographical knowledge. Greek philosophers sought to rationally explain natural phenomena. The first attempts to turn geography into an independent scientific field date back to this period.

Hecataeus of Miles (6th–5th centuries BC) wrote one of the first written geographical works. His *Periegesis* (Description of Travels) collected information about the countries, peoples, rivers, and mountains known at that time.

Herodotus (5th century BC), the "Father of History," linked geographical details with historical events. He provided extensive information about Egypt, the Scythians, and the Persian Empire.

Eratosthenes (3rd century BC) was one of the first scientists to develop geography on a scientific basis, approximately determining the perimeter of the Earth and first using the term "geography."

Strabo (1st century BC - 1st century AD) described almost all the countries of the Roman Empire, their nature, peoples, economy and customs in his 17-volume work "Geography". Strabo's works are an important source for historical geography.

Roman geography was more practical and military in nature and was associated with the expansion of the empire. Roman authors used geographical knowledge to organize, define road networks and conduct colonial policies.

Pomponius Mela (1st century AD) was one of the first authors to write a geographical work in Europe, recognizing the spherical shape of the Earth in his work "De Chorographia" and describing three continents in it.

Pliny the Elder (1st century AD) collected geographical, natural, mineral and biological data in his *Naturalis Historia*.

The Romans made important steps in creating the foundations of modern cartography. For example, the Peutinger Ring Map (*Tabula Peutingeriana*) is an ancient road map depicting the roads of the Roman Empire. Geography, and especially the systematic formation of historical geography, reached a new stage during the European Renaissance. Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598) played an important role in this process. He was known as a Flemish cartographer, historian, and expert in the sources of antiquity. In 1570, Ortelius published his work *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Theater of the World). This work is considered the first printed atlas in the world and marked a turning point in the history of modern cartography. It contains maps of the world known at that time, descriptions of countries, and historical and geographical explanations. The work consists of 53 maps and was expanded in subsequent years. Ortelius not only described existing territories, but also dealt with ancient historical geography. He studied ancient place names and

compared them with modern geographical locations. His work *Thesaurus Geographicus* is of great importance in the study of historical toponymy. Ortelius was the first to try to understand historical processes through ancient place names and ancient maps. In this regard, he made a great contribution to the formation of the science of historical geography. Based on his work, later other cartographers also began to depict historical processes on maps.

While the Ancient East, Greece and Rome laid the foundation for the formation of geographical knowledge, Abraham Ortelius played an important role in systematizing this knowledge, connecting it with history on a cartographic basis, and forming the science of historical geography as an independent direction. The maps and works he created clearly demonstrated the role and importance of the science of geography in understanding historical processes. For this reason, Ortelius can be considered one of the founders of modern historical geography.

We, the professionals, have given the two great historians of the 19th century a divine status, but it is difficult to say that neither of them made a significant direct contribution to historical geography. Humboldt's *Essai sur la Nouvelle Espagne* (Essay on New Spain) is sometimes mentioned, and it is certainly a historically constructed regional study, but he did not pay special attention to geographical changes in his major works. Ritter, on the other hand, although he was often closer to the historian than to the geographer, did not develop a methodological approach that could fully serve his vast knowledge and unique level of training in this field for historical geography. Nevertheless, his writings contain very useful ideas in this regard - especially in the twenty-five monographs contained in his thirteen-volume *Erdkunde* (Earth Science). These monographs deal with the historical occurrence and distribution of plants and animals, agriculture, animal husbandry, or minerals, and sometimes cover unusual topics such as the importance of lions and tigers in the cultural development of Asia.

The importance of these studies is that they not only defined the topics and methods for historical-geographical research, but also inspired important writers such as Alphonse de Candolle and Eduard Hahn.

Meanwhile, another type of historical-geographical interest was also taking shape among geographers. It had its roots in the deterministic views of authors such as Montesquieu, Herder, and Buckle, as well as in the works of Lyell and Darwin. This approach considered the development of culture to be strictly dependent on simple physical laws, that is, on the natural environment. Ratzel was a major influence among geographers in this regard, but a careful analysis of his works reveals that he expressed a variety of views on this issue.

A reaction quickly arose against this approach: some geographers deviated towards deterministic historical geography, while others retreated in protest to purely physical geography. In this context, a balanced and sound historical-geographical approach developed from the French regional school led by Vidal. However, it was Febvre who most effectively criticized those who considered environmental influences to be absolute.

It can be seen that neither the French regional school nor the ecological determinism of Germany and Britain were the main factors in the formation of modern historical geography. The main contributors to this field were ethnographers in Europe and empirical economic historians in Great Britain. The former, that is, ethnographers, include August Meitzen's revolutionary research in 1895 and Eduard Hahn's research on the domestication and distribution of plants and animals. In Britain, the founder of the empirical school of economic history was Sir J. H. Clapham, whose works on economic history, although not directly devoted to historical geography, were clearly concerned with the economic geography of the past.

It is not the purpose of this essay to provide a comprehensive analysis of the contributions made to the literature on historical geography in Europe in the last few decades. However, it must be said that there has been a large and diverse body of work in this area. Some important works in German include Götze's *Geography of the Hittites*, Klotz's geographical analysis of Caesar's works, Kretschmer's work on the reconstruction of the ancient geography of Central Europe, Oelmann's study "Economy and Home in the Ancient World", Passarge's interpretation of the geography of the pre-Magellanic Pacific islands, Sapper's economic geographical study of pre-Columbian animals in the New World, Schott's work on the settlement and colonization of the Canadian territories, and Schumacher's work on the location and cultural history of the Rhine Valley peoples.

Most of these works are purely or mainly geographical, and German economic and regional studies dealing with contemporary topics often also pay close attention to the historical context. Gradmann's work on Southern Germany (Süd-Deutschland) is a clear example. Furthermore, this list does not take into account the extensive studies on ice age geomorphology, changing climate, plant groups, and soils.

The French school of geography—especially that of Vidal—continued the historical-geographical direction it had begun earlier. Although German and British scholars also expressed interest in the geography of pre-literate periods, it is French authors, notably Deffontaines, who have arguably conducted the most methodologically interesting research in this area. On the other hand, Demangeon's

work on the relationship between geography and history during the French Revolution, his joint study of the Rhine with Febvre, and Gallois' work on the changes in the northern and eastern borders of France are examples of the results achieved in this field.

There is also a wealth of relevant research by non-geographers. For example, any researcher studying the historical geography of Europe will undoubtedly benefit from Henri Pirenne's work on medieval cities, Jarde's account of grain cultivation in ancient Greece, or Dienne's study of the history of the drying up of lakes and marshes in pre-revolutionary France.

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